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Memo to Dems: collectivist tide is ebbing

HOW arcane can a cluster of "liberal" minds get?

Everything happening now points to a world future in which collectivism, under whatever form, is dying.

Yet a steep majority of the House of Representatives has voted to protect a regime in Nicaragua which is not part of a gleaming wave of the future but the last dribble of a shabby, receding wave of the past.

If we needed further reminder of how the tides of history are moving, take the gathering in Indonesia this week to mark the Bandung conference of 30 years ago.

That conference opened the era of the "unaligned" but actually left-oriented Third World. It was still the age of

By MAX LERNER

innocence, before the Third World leaders had eaten of the tree of knowledge about the nature of collectivism.

The leaders of the emerging Third World were all there — Sukarno as host, Chou En-lai, Nehru, Nasser, Nkrumah, U Nu.

They all declared themselves "neutral" but they were neutral in favor of the rising Communist power in the world and the Soviet-Chinese model of economic development through collectivization.

The model has since failed dismally.

In China the new leadership has already opted for the entrepreneur spirit. India, too

has moved westward.

The issue in the Third World is no longer colonialism but sheer economic survival, in which collectivism is more likely to be the problem than the solution.

Fidel Castro was a late-comer to the "nonaligned" post-Bandung cluster, and tried to take it over in the service of the Soviet Union.

Now his economy, which has to depend completely on Soviet support, is scarcely a model for others to follow.

Castro's efforts in the '50s and '60s to overthrow South American regimes by guerrilla violence finally foundered. The result was the emergence of rightist military regimes, now replaced by democracies, however shaky.

The overthrow of Nicaragua's Somoza regime might also have led to a democracy, but American diplomacy and aid were bungled by the Carter regime, and the Castro-type pro-Moscow junta was the result.

It is a chapter of history worth brooding over.

The rise of the contras has obviously been aided — and bungled — by the CIA.

But it has a strength of its own which comes out of the disillusionment of small enterprisers and the failed collectivism of the junta's policies.

If the Democrats want to be remembered as innocents still caught in the old, moldering Bandung mystique, no one will be able to save them.